

July 14, 2020

ANNOUNCEMENT

Dear Gates County Schools' Families and Staff:

Today Governor Roy Cooper issued a joint statement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), the NC State Board of Education (NCSBE) and the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI), announcing that the state is moving forward with implementing Plan B for reopening schools.

The requirements under Plan B have been updated, and are outlined in detail in the newest version of the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12). All schools will start the year operating under Plan B health and safety requirements. However, schools will have flexibility in how they choose to implement the requirements to meet their needs, and it is expected that all schools will also offer full-time virtual instruction for higher-risk students, teachers and families opting into remote learning for themselves and their children.

Key updates to the StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit (K-12):

- Plan B social distancing and density requirements now offer more flexibility for districts to limit the number of people inside school buildings to the extent needed to meet 6 feet social distancing requirements
- Cloth face coverings are required for all students from Kindergarten through 12th Grade in school and on buses, and for all teachers, school staff, and adult visitors
- How teachers and staff should interact with each other in the safest ways possible
- Recommendations provided for physical education, music, and band
- Remote learning options must be provided for students who are at high-risk for severe disease due to COVID-19, or whose family members are at high-risk

Other important updates:

- Along with the toolkit, NCDHHS is releasing updated screening guide with detailed and easy-to-follow protocols for the next steps schools should take if a student, teacher, staff member, or adult visitor presents with COVID-19 symptoms, or who discloses exposure to COVID-19, or who shares they tested positive.
- In addition to the two-month supply of PPE materials already sent out to every public school across the state and detailed in the updated Infection Control and PPE guidance, Governor Cooper announced the shipment of five cloth face coverings for every elementary, middle, and high school student across NC, and for every teacher and school staff member.

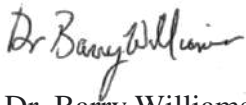
Gates County Schools' staff are working diligently to establish our instructional and safety plan for the opening of school in August. In our planning, we will now take into consideration the updates to Plan B provided by the Governor. The documents mentioned in this letter are available on the Gates County Schools website.

I understand that many of you have questions and concerns regarding the reopening of schools in August, how schedules might be altered, and what health and safety precautions will be in place. The Governor's announcement gives us the ability to move forward with finalizing plans.

Your feedback is extremely important in our planning and I appreciated those of you who have completed surveys. Being given the directive by the Governor to reopen under Plan B with updated directives, I encourage everyone to access the survey on the district website or the schools' websites to provide us with your feedback.

I appreciate your patience, understanding, and grace as we work through the COVID-19 pandemic and the impact it has taken on our school system.

Thank you and stay healthy and safe,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dr. Barry Williams". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr. Barry Williams, Superintendent of Schools